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Shirley Jackson--Escaping The Patriarchy Through Insanity

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SHIRLEY JACKSON -- ESCAPING THE PATRIARCHY THROUGH INSANITY

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Shirley Jackson -- Escaping the Patriarchy

Through Insanity

(TITLE)

BY

Jennifer Noack

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes Shirley Jackson's description of female insanity as an escape from society, particularly a society constructed around the patriarchy. The three novels and characters discussed are The Haunting of Hill House (Eleanor), We Have Always Lived in the Castle (Merricat), and The Sundial (Aunt Fanny). The three main female characters in each novel are closely related and can, in fact, be seen as the same character placed in different situations. Feminist archetypal theory is used to develop this idea; the core character created out of this theory defines the basic character description used in the novels. The subsequent chapters show how each character begins as the core character and becomes an individual only when applied to her individualized story.

Because mental illness is the most important facet of these character's personality, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R) is used to define each character's psychological state. The similarities between mental illnesses as well as the cause and effects of those illnesses are examined. The chapters that focus on individual novels discuss the decent into insanity of each woman, emphasizing her type of relationship with the patriarchy and

how, both before and after mental illness, that relationship affects her. Anger plays an important part in the lives of these women and is intertwined with mental illness.

After examining the core character and the mental illness suffered by the individuals, Joseph Campbell's mythical quest theory is applied to the novels. The quest theory shows how the characters journey toward releasing themselves from the grasp of the patriarchy. The mythical battle with the dragon becomes a showdown with the patriarchy. The variance between the three novels is found in the outcome of the battles with the patriarchy. Eleanor loses her battle by giving in to the oppression and letting herself be killed, Merricat defeats the patriarchy twice, and Aunt Fanny remains stagnant, forever fighting her oppression.

The goal of this paper is to show how Jackson develops a basic character, applies her to several situations and offers the reader a variety of endings. The characters' battles end in three different ways allowing Jackson to show the three possible outcomes of battling oppression. It is important to note that not all of the oppressive characters are men; although patriarchal oppression is the main type of dominance displayed, oppression in general appears to be the bigger evil.

Jackson shows through these works that dominance and oppression can be fought. However, although some of the characters defeat their oppression, Jackson is quick to

point out that their lives are still not perfect or peaceful. Because of the structure of society, these women cannot permanently escape, through insanity or violence, the society that surrounds them. Jackson ends all three of the novels questioning the lives that result from both the oppression and the battles.

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1. The Creation of the Core Character

Shirley Jackson has written a variety of works exploring the relationship between women and their society and how that relationship often leads to madness. Both her novels and short stories examine how individual females come to terms with the patriarchal system that suppresses them, focusing mainly on mental illness as a form of escape. This oppression and escape is especially evident in three of Jackson's thriller novels. Eleanor in The Haunting of Hill House, Merricat in We Have Always Lived in the Castle, and Aunt Fanny in The Sundial come face to face with the patriarchal society that surrounds them and resort to insanity as a way of internalizing and dealing with the oppression they feel.

Each of these characters spends the novel searching for her identity within the restrictive society and battling the confining domination; they branch off, though, toward different fates through the outcome of the battles. Eleanor's suicidal car crash makes a statement far different from the fates of Merricat (who fights the patriarchy by poisoning her family) and Aunt Fanny (who eternally waits for the guidance of her dead father). The variety of

endings allows Jackson to experiment with the possible effects of patriarchal domination and toy with different statements on female oppression.

However, Jackson's ultimate statement on societal domination is made through the complete insanity of each character, no matter how she fares during her battle with the patriarchy. Contemporary feminist critics seem to agree with Jackson:

> Feminist critics are ... building on the radical psychology of R.D. Laing, seeing madness largely as a political event stemming from female oppression in a male-dominated culture. Phyllis Chesler, in her book Women and Madness, strongly criticizes traditional psychotherapy for reflecting and sustaining an image of woman which emphasizes her helplessness and dependency upon male authority figures. Accordingly, to enforce or expect compliance with rigid sex roles is more causative than curative of some forms of madness in women. (Parks 16)

Jackson effectively argues through the lives of her characters that the patriarchy mistreats its female members and those women turn to insanity as a way of dealing with the domination; although some women fight back, Jackson continually comes to the same conclusion: none of the women

are able to lead normal lives because of the oppression which suffocates them.

In order to display this type of societally induced insanity, Jackson creates a "core" character which functions as a basis for the three dominated women. This core is a compilation of the general characteristics Jackson sees in the women of her era (such as frustration, anger, powerlessness, and suppressed desires). These characteristics are woven into the core so that each woman begins with the emotions Jackson finds so predominant in her female contemporaries. The characters become archetypal, in a sense, because they serve as models for a basic experience. Although archetype suggests something which all people experience (or all in a particular category), Jackson is successful in creating a kind of limited archetype for women, displaying it through three character examples.

By creating this limited archetype or core, Jackson enables her characters to remain intertwined with each other yet be seen as individuals. Jackson uses the core in a very simple manner; she takes the same beginnings for each character and applies them to a specific situation, emerging with what will be referred to as the completed character. Layered on top of the core are the individual features such as age, mental state and position in society. The characters only truly become individuals, however, when they begin to feel their way through their story and make

decisions based on those completed characteristics.

In Carol Pearson's The Hero Within, an archetypal category similar to the personality structure of Jackson's core character is described:

> The Orphan's story is about a felt powerlessness, about a yearning for a return to a primal kind of innocence, an innocence that is fully childlike, where their every need is cared for by an all-loving mother or father-figure. This yearning is juxtaposed against a sense of abandonment, a sense that somehow we are supposed to live in a garden, safe and cared for, and instead are dumped out, orphans, into the wilderness, prey to villains and monsters. It's about looking for people to care for them, about forgoing autonomy and independence to secure that care; ... At base is Orphan's fear of powerlessness and abandonment, a fear so profound that it usually is not experienced directly. The more apparent emotion is anger -- either turned inward in a belief that somehow the Fall <of Adam and Eve> is our own fault, or else turned outward toward God, the universe, parents, institutions -- anything or anyone that can be identified as not properly taking care of them. (28-29)

This Orphan archetype lies at the center of Jackson's core character and is the beginning point of each woman's search for identity. For example, the literal description of an orphan fits each individual character at the opening of the novels because none of these women has a positive parental figure. In fact, Eleanor, Merricat, and Aunt Fanny have no parents at all; each has only a member of the family with whom they live, though they are not necessarily close to them. None of the novels display, through the character's memories, a positive parent/child relationship, leaving all the women figurative (and literal) orphans. Jackson expands on this issue by ingraining in her characters a keen sense of not belonging; the restless feelings each character has are, simply, a desire for a place where they are truly wanted.

While Pearson's archetype describes a powerless orphan, it also describes the evil of the "villains and monsters" who seek to consume her. Jackson's women are constantly looking for someone to care for and about them but are met only with people who seek to abuse and dominate them. The villains and the monsters are the society around them, one which is usually, but not always, dominated by men. In the patriarchal system Jackson lays out, women equally participate in the oppression. Each character has fought with, or fights with during the novel, a domineering, bossy woman. While the men use society's stereotype of the strong

man/weak woman to oppress the character, the other females simply have no qualms about stepping on each other in order to make their own life richer. The orphan's archetypal feelings of abandonment are enhanced because Jackson's core character cannot even trust her own sex.

Along with feelings of abandonment and powerlessness, the orphan archetype also describes the reactionary and "more apparent emotion of anger." Beginning with anger from the literal/figurative abandonment, the characters move into a deeper rage through the domination they suffer at the hands of society. Jackson leads each of her characters through a maze of emotions beginning with the orphaned/abandoned feelings, moving through a frustrating clash with society and arriving, finally, at anger. It is made very clear by Jackson that each character is suffocated by the intensity of her anger. Merricat's extreme rage, for example, caused her to murder most of her family. Although individual characters may not at first seem angry, in her discussion of the character's life Jackson provides clues which point toward an all-consuming, very fierce and driving anger.

In his book Anger, Frederic Stearns describes anger as a "well-delimited concept and response to an offending stimulus" but separates it from hostility, aggression, or rage (5). Jackson, however, combines the continually offending stimulus (society) with the sometimes latent

reactions of hostility, aggression and rage. The character feels the stimulus, funnels it through her individual circumstances and characteristics, and allows such a deep, hard rage to evolve that she eventually explodes. By combining the stimulus with the reaction, Jackson shows a cause and effect situation, sifting the pregnant anger through the minds of her completed characters. In turn, the combination of this anger and the insanity from which each woman suffers eventually leads to the individualized outcome of the three stories, dictating whether the woman defeats her surroundings, succumbs to patriarchy, or remains immobilized by it.

Jackson begins to individualize the characters by expanding Pearson's orphan archetype through mental illness. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders will be consulted throughout the subsequent chapters for a more in depth definition of each character's ailments. The mental disorders Jackson chooses vary both in actual disorders and degrees/depth of the illness. Eleanor battles Avoidant/Dependent Personality Disorder, which makes her desire for acceptance even stronger than the orphan archetype suggests; Aunt Fanny and Merricat display schizophrenia with a variety of fantastic delusions. Aunt Fanny also suffers from hallucinations while Merricat seeks solace in a bizarre series of obsessive/compulsive behaviors. Jackson builds the individual from the core by

adding and emphasizing different mental illnesses in different characters, then weaving that individuality into the orphan archetype.

The most common feature, though, in each character's mental dysfunction is acute paranoia, which not only inhibits the character from growing into a healthy, functioning woman but separates her from the rest of humanity simply by definition of the disorder: "a pervasive and unwarranted tendency ... to interpret the actions of people as deliberately demeaning or threatening" (DSM 337). Having learned that people can be hurtful and restrictive, each character finds it difficult to trust anyone. However, because the orphan archetype has anchored these women in a search for belonging, they find themselves in a no-win situation -- they have an intense desire to belong but yet maintain an equally intense sense of mistrust. For example, after spending most of her life caring for her invalid mother, Eleanor has fully developed both the inability to trust others and the unquenchable desire for a sense of belonging.

The road between the orphan state and mental illness is, then, a short one. None of the characters can combine the needs of the orphan with the feedback they receive from the patriarchal society and are therefore led, through the maddening desire for release from a powerless state, to insanity. Because they are unable to attain the goals

sought for in the orphan archetype, Jackson's characters turn toward madness as a way of releasing their unfulfilled desires. For example, Aunt Fanny cannot accept that her domination will continue even after the death of her father. She retaliates against her sister-in-law by creating messages which she "receives" from the spirit of her father. Although she suffers from intense mental illness, she gains more control over her life by using it to her advantage. Madness is a quest for Aunt Fanny, one which leads her to the sense of belonging and power that she desires.

Through the creation of the core character and the application of individualizing characteristics, Jackson creates three intertwined women ready to begin their personal battles with patriarchal domination. One type of pattern which proves effective in analyzing these battles is the mythical journey, as described by Joseph Campbell. According to Campbell's theory, the successful journeyer must receive a call to adventure, cross over the threshold to adventure (which signifies the actual beginning of the journey), battle the metaphorical dragon, return once again over the threshold and preferably bring back some kind of elixir to enhance his or her society (245). Although all parts of the quest are apparent in Jackson's work, the most revealing section is the battle with the metaphorical dragon or "other." Each novel opens with the character having already battled to some extent with the dragon (patriarchal

society). They are all frustrated, angry and ready for a final, climatic fight with the patriarchy. In We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Merricat has already launched a counterstrike by poisoning the dominating figures in her life -- but the battle continues. For these women, the "other" (the dragon) that they battle is always a representation of the patriarchy which restricts them as well as a representation of the part of themselves that has been taught to support patriarchal dominance.

Jackson creates the battle between society and a woman whose anger will not allow her to continue living a dominated life to show the various outcomes such domination can have. She sets her characters off on this mythical journey (which climaxes in the battle) with psychological disturbances intact but does not allow any of them to complete it. Instead of standing back and watching her character move through the cycle and the battle, Jackson creates an atmosphere in which no journeyer could succeed, thereby allowing her character to crumble under the influence of an impossible journey, metaphorically crumbling under society. In using this approach, Jackson calls for a deeper analysis of individual reactions to the current societal structure and its pressures.

Although the journey is very often quite physical, it functions at a much deeper level when traveled psychologically. Jackson applies the theory in both the

physical and psychological sense; however, viewing the journey through the psychological approach leads to further correlations between society and insanity. These correlations are shown most effectively through the outcome of the battle with the dragon, the point in the journey that Jackson toys with most. In placing her characters in different circumstances, Jackson is able to create an experimental setting which varies the ending of the stories (the results of the battles) which leads, in turn, to the meat of her argument. The characters are used as experimental data and put, like rats, into the maze, allowing Jackson to try out different ways of dealing with the patriarchy. One woman succeeds in staving off the ill effects of being dominated, one does not and continues to live under the watchful eye of her oppressors, while the third simply dies. Whatever the outcome, Jackson's novels become not just a haunting or psychotic story but a commentary on the way her society treats women and the options for change they are given.

2. Eleanor and the House that Hugh Built

The Haunting of Hill House sets up the patriarchal and psychological boundaries which Jackson continually explores, while putting her core character in a no-win situation. The novel maps out the descent into insanity of Eleanor Vance while commenting on the society which brings this woman to her death. The story begins when Eleanor, a rather lifeless woman, is invited to take place in a psychic experiment involving a haunted house. As the mental deterioration of Eleanor unfolds, the seductive intent of the house becomes apparent, allowing Jackson to juxtapose the searching attitudes of both the house and Eleanor. The actual manifestations of the house show an evil favoritism toward Eleanor and, by the end of the novel, she is completely under the control of the house, succumbing to its influences and allowing herself to be killed.

Eleanor is an ideal example of the orphan archetype. She fits perfectly into Pearson's description because she is completely powerless as well as being extremely inexperienced. Eleanor spends the entire novel searching for something to do with herself and for someone to care

about her. She finds those qualities, unfortunately, in the crazed house (which "can only be evil") that seeks to destroy her (26). What Jackson displays in this story is the inability of the barely-beyond core woman she has created to handle the forces of the patriarchy which strive to consume her. The evil of the house combined with the weakness of Eleanor's spirit eventually lead to her ruin. The other characters who come into contact with the house are not consumed by it; only Eleanor accepts the invitations of the evil house because she does not have the sense of self to resist. Therefore, the state of Eleanor's mind clearly makes her a prime target for Hill House.

At the beginning of the novel, Jackson makes it clear that Eleanor is a classic orphan who does not have the mental strength to resist any type of force, especially the patriarchy. She describes Eleanor by conveying a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness -- emotions which the house senses and takes advantage of:

> <Eleanor> could not remember ever being truly happy in her adult life; her years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair. Without ever wanting to become reserved and shy, she had spent so long alone, with no one to love, that it was difficult for her to talk, even casually, to another person

> without self-consciousness and an awkward inability to find words. (7)

Eleanor is obviously orphaned, lonely and alienated. The house simply magnifies the growing separation between Eleanor and the rest of the society, easily terminating her grasp on reality and the normal functioning world. Eleanor opts for the twisted acceptance the house provides and succumbs to the horrifying sanctity Hill House offers.

The loneliness and alienation act not only as the major tools which help to cement the house's interest but also as the major symptoms of Eleanor's mental illness. According to the psychological descriptions of mental illnesses in the DSM-III-R, Eleanor can be diagnosed as suffering from both Avoidant Personality Disorder and Dependent Personality Disorder as well as paranoia. These two disorders show both "a pervasive pattern of social discomfort, fear of negative evaluation, and timidity" and "a pervasive pattern of dependent and submissive behavior" respectively (352-353), while paranoia renders Eleanor unable to trust. As stated earlier, Eleanor has become painfully shy and socially inept; however, her dependent behavior (although hinted at in the description of her earlier life) does not become obvious until she meets with the rest of the people involved in the psychological experiment being performed at Hill House. The other major woman in the novel, Theodora, represents someone to whom Eleanor can attach herself, and

she does so very quickly. However, because Theodora is a normal, functioning woman and Eleanor is too paranoid to completely trust her, the relationship does not last long and Eleanor continues to look for acceptance, finding it only in the house.

At the base of Eleanor's mental instability lies the anger of the orphan archetype, born in her through the domination she has dealt with all of her life. Jackson immediately paints Eleanor as a meek, but becoming angry, individual who is easily ruled by others, beginning with her invalid mother and ending with Hill House. The novel opens with this statement about Eleanor's hatred which eventually turns into blind rage: "Eleanor Vance was thirty-two years old when she came to Hill House. The only person in the world she genuinely hated, now that her mother was dead, was her sister. She disliked her brother-in-law and her five-year-old niece, and she had no friends" (7). Eleanor's anger becomes the catalyst which pushes her toward the house's evil and sets the stage for the aborted relationships at Hill House.

Eleanor's domination is continued by the other characters who sometimes take her seriously and sometimes treat her like a child. Theodora alternately treats Eleanor like a wounded bird and an annoying housefly. The mixed signals that Eleanor receives build the paranoia, making it hard for her to trust others. For example, when Eleanor and

Theodora first meet, Theodora instantly begins to mother Eleanor, calming her fears about the house: "'Don't be so afraid all the time,' <Theodora> said and reached out to touch Eleanor's cheek with one finger. 'We never know where our courage is coming from'" (37). Later on, though, after cooing to Eleanor "'Come along, baby, ... Theo will wash your face for you and make you all neat for breakfast'" (145), Theodora snaps, "'I don't understand ... Do you always go where you're not wanted?'" (148). Dr. Montague (the scientist in charge of the experiment) provides, on the other hand, the stereotypical patriarchal influence by controlling the experiment and therefore the people involved in it. He flexes his authority from beginning to end by choosing what rooms the group will meet in (43), what they will do during the experiment (45) and when Eleanor will leave Hill House (170). Through the other characters, Hill House continues to dominate Eleanor, driving her toward its seeming acceptance.

After Eleanor's interpersonal relationships become unstable, Jackson begins to change her. Eleanor is no longer just a meek person whose anger bubbles below the surface or even just simply an embodiment of the orphan archetype; she becomes someone possessed by such a violent anger that her gentle nature fades and an evil strangely similar to that of the house emerges. Eleanor's anger becomes so deep that she wants to hurt those to whom she

once felt close: "I would like to hit her with a stick ... I would like to batter her with rocks ... I would like to watch her dying" (112), Eleanor says of Theodora as she taps into her suppressed anger, an anger that perhaps the house senses and hopes to release. Imitating her fears and providing an insane haven, Hill House rises up to meet Eleanor as she spirals downward into her rage and succeeds in forever alienating her from other people by instigating Eleanor's death.

The story of Eleanor's decent into insanity and eventual death can also be seen through the lens of Campbell's quest motif. By applying Campbell's theory to the novel, Eleanor becomes a searching journeyer whose eventual total insanity inhibits the completion of the mythical cycle. Jackson starts Eleanor, with psychological disturbances and orphan archetype intact, on the journey. Changed by her negative societal experiences, Eleanor has resorted to insanity in order to deal with life. This insanity stops her from slaying the mythical dragon and bringing back a positive elixir for her society. Jackson is careful to show in the death of Eleanor that the hero does not always win and that, perhaps, there is no elixir to strengthen a cruel and dominating society.

Eleanor begins the mythical cycle according to Campbell's view of the adventurer. She receives her call to adventure from Dr. Montague and, by responding to the

invitation, begins her adventure; the threshold is crossed by arriving at Hill House. Eleanor is excited by the call to adventure because her life, up until this point, had been rather dull and empty. Jackson clearly exhibits this point by stating: "During the whole underside of her life, ever since her first memory, Eleanor had been waiting for something like Hill House ... in short, <she> would have gone anywhere" (8). This emptiness acts as the driving force behind Eleanor's acceptance of the invitation in the first place and is also the emptiness that leads her to destruction.

The break from Campbell's mythical cycle occurs when Eleanor crosses the threshold of adventure and begins to battle the metaphorical dragon (the house and all of its evil). Campbell describes what the crossing of the threshold and the subsequent battle should entail:

> Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threatens him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. (246)

Eleanor encounters all of the listed points but does not win the battle and gain the reward. Her supreme ordeal entails fighting off the overpowering evil of the haunted, haunting

house which stands for the dominance she has endured all of her life. Eleanor's feelings of disgust and fear when she first encounters the house act as her symbolic reaction to the system of society. "The house was vile. She shivered and thought, the words coming freely into her mind, Hill House is vile, it is diseased; get away from here at once ... I should have turned back at the gate, Eleanor thought ... listening to the sick voice inside her which whispered, Get away from here, get away" (25-6). By being the most dominant force (it even supersedes the patriarchal dominance of Dr. Montague), the house sends the message of the unchanging and undefeatable society in which Eleanor lives. Jackson is describing, then, not a hero triumphing over her domination, but a mentally ill woman crumbling beneath it.

Eleanor and Hill House begin the novel as archetypal juxtapositions of each other as well as journeyer and dragon. Eleanor is the archetype of good (though rather misled and confused) because of her lack of experience; the house functions as the archetype of evil whose consuming anger eventually taps into Eleanor's anger, causing the two to become one. Hill House, which senses and uses Eleanor's anger against her, is unerringly patriarchal from its conception. Built by an over-powering patriarchal and dominating man named Hugh Crane, Hill House has taken on the angry attitudes of its creator, using the same sense of domineering power to control Eleanor. The description of

the house (even the road leading to it which is "deeply rutted and rocky ... <with> oppressive trees on either side" <21>) shows its evil, its powerful dominating abilities and its own intense insanity:

> No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice. Almost any house, caught unexpectedly or at an odd angle, can turn a deeply humorous look on a watching person; even a mischievous little chimney, or a dormer like a dimple, can catch up a beholder with a sense of fellowship; but a house arrogant and hating, never off guard, can only be evil. (26)

The ugliness and watchfulness of the house display Jackson's view of the patriarchy; by stepping back and seeing the house (or patriarchal society) as a whole, one has a clear view of its ugly and dark nature. The watchfulness perfectly describes Jackson's patriarchal system in that the oppressors constantly watch and monitor those they oppress. Eleanor's consistent subjection to the careful glances of

the other characters shows the watchful domination of the people who surround her (48, 74, 114); however, the ultimate oppressor, Hill House, remains the one who watches her the most (26, 59, 61).

The house, like the patriarchy, becomes arrogant, believing it has the right to control someone and succeeds because Eleanor does not believe she has the right to go uncontrolled: "I will relinquish my possession of this self of mine, abdicate, give over willingly <to the house> what I never wanted at all; whatever it wants of me it can have" (144). The continued description of the house shows the negativity of both the house and patriarchal society:

> This house, which seemed somehow to have formed itself, flying together into its own powerful pattern under the hands of its builders, fitting itself into its own construction of lines and angles, reared its great head back against the sky without concession of humanity. It was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or love or hope. Exorcism cannot alter the countenance of a house; Hill House would stay as it was until it was destroyed. (26)

The "powerful pattern" reflects the patriarchy because it allows no love or hope. In using these descriptions of the house as statements on the patriarchal system, Jackson

creates the house as both an archetype of evil and a prototype of patriarchal dominance, clearly stating that the two are one: patriarchal dominance is evil.

In its attempts to dominate Eleanor, Hill House shows no mercy; its pure evil reads her emotions and traps her in its web. After sensing Eleanor's hidden anger and almost panicky desire to belong, the house begins the mythical battle by systematically hunting her. The manifestations which occur during Eleanor's journey are obviously directed toward her and are a successful attempt to alienate her from the other characters; by alienating her from the others, Hill House, the mythical dragon, wins the battle.

Perhaps the most eerie part of the whole haunting is that the house mimics Eleanor's emotions and longings, providing for her a sense of sameness and understanding which ultimately binds her to the house. By using Eleanor's own feelings, the house creates a sense of comradery, offering to her a seemingly kindred spirit while at the same time alienating her from the others. Eleanor eventually finds she has no people who understand her, only Hill House which unquestioningly provides her with the sense of belonging she so desperately seeks.

The first manifestation mirrors Eleanor's powerful sense of searching. The ghost begins by banging on the doors of the bedrooms in a mimicingly searching manner: "It pounded regularly for a minute, and then suddenly more

softly, and then again in a quick flurry seeming to be going methodically from door to door at the end of the hall" (92). In her fear, Eleanor shouts out and instantly recognizes her mistake: "'Go away, go away!' There was complete silence, and Eleanor thought, standing with her face against the door, Now I've done it; it was looking for the room with someone inside" (92). However, the house was not just looking for anyone, it was looking for Eleanor. This idea of a searching ghost, which is repeated throughout the novel, mimics not only Eleanor's archetypal orphan desires but also the searching she does for her identity. Hill House continues its copy-cat searching mode by twice leaving a message on one of its walls, reading: "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (103 and 110). The message could be interpreted in two ways: the house is telling Eleanor to help herself by coming home to it; or, the house is calling for help from Eleanor -- helping it, the house, would be to come home to it.

Through these phantom wall messages, the house touches a nerve in Eleanor by coming too close to her own feelings and severs the already rocky relationships between her and the other characters; Eleanor finds herself thinking: "I am outside ... I am the one chosen" (104). Eleanor has begun to doubt herself and Jackson continues to show the deterioration of Eleanor's human relationships by having Theodora accuse Eleanor of writing the ghostly messages

herself. Eleanor is enraged because everyone seems a little bit skeptical of her innocence; her relationships with others deteriorate further as Eleanor's rage becomes apparent and she and Theodora begin sporadically to bicker. The house has begun to sever Eleanor from all human ties by physically and mentally separating Eleanor from the others.

Jackson proceeds to describes the swallowing up of Eleanor by creating further scenes in which the house caters to Eleanor's sense of searching, while at the same time separating her from the other people. During one manifestation Eleanor hears from the ghost the exact words she used during the first manifestation. The voice of the ghost cries out "Go away, go away" while Eleanor clings to what she thinks is Theodora's hand. Eleanor cries out, ending the incident and waking Theodora, only to realize that Theodora did not even hear the voice, let alone hold Eleanor's hand. By finding out that she was not drawing support from Theodora but from the ghost itself, Eleanor is further separated from the other people. The house now offers not only belonging and understanding but also support.

Hill House appeals to Eleanor's orphan archetype and sense of powerlessness in many different ways, offering to her what she cannot find in relationships with people. From the very beginning, Eleanor finds the house "dreadful and yet in many respects so physically comfortable" (65).

Jackson creates the final manifestation as a positive experience, thus completely severing Eleanor from the others. Instead of being frightened when she encounters a bodiless voice in the forest, Eleanor allows the empty footsteps and voice calling her name to come closer and wrap her in, not the usual cold, but a warm accepting air:

> "Eleanor, Eleanor," and she heard it inside and outside her head; this was the call she had been listening for all her life ... "Eleanor, Eleanor," and she was held tight and safe. It is not cold at all, she thought, it is not cold at all. She closed her eyes and leaned back against the bank and thought, Don't let me go, and then Stay, stay, as the firmness which held her slipped away, leaving her and fading. (152)

The house has succeeded in bewitching Eleanor, shown through her preference for the ghost as opposed to her human companions. By the end of the novel, the house has attacked Eleanor through all of her five senses as well as her mind. Not only is she completely distanced from the other people around her, but she can no longer trust her own body, her own senses. This type of alienation is the house's trump card. By separating her from other people, Hill House leaves only itself to fulfill Eleanor's orphan desires; but, by alienating her from herself, through eliminating her trust in her senses, Eleanor has no hope in even looking

inward for stability. She has no where left to turn and succumbs to the patriarchal domination of the house; Hill House has won the battle and defeated Eleanor who, while under its spell, drives her car into a tree, ending forever her tormented life of domination.

The Haunting of Hill House displays Jackson's core character in a negative situation which cannot be made positive. Eleanor is caught and driven to insanity by the vicious cycle of patriarchy, a patriarchy in which women participate becoming equally hurting and harmful. Paradoxically, the house provides a place of belonging for Eleanor while simultaneously entrapping her in the same type of dominance from which she hopes to escape. Although she asks herself throughout the book why she has been chosen as well as why she does not follow her instincts and leave the house, Eleanor remains much too enticed with the hope of ending her orphan state to ever sever the growing relationship between her and the house. Therefore, the house gains complete control and causes Eleanor to die. Jackson effectively closes the novel in the same way that she opens it showing that, although the mythical journey cycle was not successfully completed, the cycle of patriarchal dominance, and female destruction because of it, continues to revolve:

> Hill House itself, not sane, stood against its hill, holding darkness within; it had stood

> so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, its walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone. (174)

The cycle of a consuming society has destroyed another woman and continues, waiting and watching for its next victim.

3. Merricat the Warrior

We Have Always Lived in the Castle takes an angle very different from the victimization of Eleanor. Eighteen year old Merricat is a warrior who, having dealt with patriarchal dominance long enough, takes her future into her own hands. The story is told in first person, by Merricat herself. She describes her life with her sister, Constance, and her invalid uncle, Julian, after the death by poisoning of most of her family (Julian has been permanently injured by the incident). The novel leads the reader to believe that Constance has killed the family, but Merricat eventually reveals that she is guilty of the murders and that Constance has protectively taken the blame for them. The girls have been shunned by the small village in which they live and Merricat spends the novel trying to barricade them in permanent and total isolation from both society in general and further patriarchal attacks.

We Have Always Lived in the Castle shows the core character, as insane as the others, powerfully retaliating against the patriarchy. Although Merricat's life may not be what is normally desired, she has, in her own way,

successfully driven out patriarchal dominance. Jackson creates this novel as an opposite of The Haunting of Hill House, showing Merricat as somewhat victorious and, more importantly, surviving the battles; however, Jackson questions both the means of victory and the life after it, pointing out that even when beaten, patriarchal domination is still destructive because Merricat cannot lead a normal life.

As the novel reveals, Merricat was, upon getting in trouble, sent to bed without supper; consequently, she put poison in the sugar bowl in retaliation against the authoritative outburst and the domination which had left her both restricted and ignored. When the family put sugar on their after-meal berries, they unknowingly added arsenic (Merricat knew that Constance never used sugar on her berries thereby insuring Constance's survival). Merricat does not view Constance as a threat but as the only person who ever protected her from the outside world (the novel briefly elaborates on their close relationship before the murders). After being accused and acquitted of the murders, Constance continues to protect Merricat by beginning their secluded lives. Jackson uses the relationship between the sisters to show how "female self-sufficiency ... specifically women's forceful establishment of power over their own lives, threatens a society in which men hold primary power and leads inevitably to confrontation"

(Carpenter 32). The sisters, having put the overthrow of the patriarchal system out of their minds, enjoy a lifestyle which they control; however, the patriarchy cannot forget what has happened. The murder story is revealed by the remnant of the patriarchy, Uncle Julian, who, rather crazed from the effects of the poison, spends his time shuffling through the newspaper clippings about the murders and rehashing that fateful day. Constance has taken over the stereotypical male role of head of the household by caring for Merricat and what is left of the patriarchy, Uncle Julian (Carpenter 33).

Merricat begins her existence like the other core characters, within the orphan archetype, and in some senses remains there. She has a desperate need to please and be accepted by her sister because Constance fills the role of the "all loving mother" (Pearson 28). In fact, Constance, in her parental role, is the only character who seems to have some control over the out-of-control madness contained in Merricat. She is allowed to dominate Merricat <u>because it is alright with Merricat</u>. Throughout the novel, Merricat checks her position with Constance by saying, "I love you." If Constance answers, Merricat is assured that no trouble exists between them and that their little, isolated world will continue on as usual (68). Still feeling the effects of the orphan archetype, Merricat senses that she could easily be abandoned and clings tightly to Constance. She

does not search for belonging, as Eleanor does, but instead tries desperately to maintain the security for which she has killed.

What varies from Jackson's other characters, though, is Merricat's incorporation of the orphan archetypal state with the warrior state. Pearson describes the warrior archetype as a character whose goals are to gain strength and effectiveness and ultimately slay the dragon (20):

> The Warrior stays and fights <the dragon>. And it is the archetype of the Warrior that <u>is</u> our culture's definition of heroism. The underlying moral of this story is that good can and will triumph over evil, but even more fundamental than that, the story tells us that when people have the courage to fight for themselves they can affect their worlds ... Warriors change their worlds by asserting their will and their image of a better world upon them. (74 and 76)

Merricat finds that the world in which she lives is not to her satisfaction; although her means of changing her situation (murder) is morally wrong, Merricat takes her world and fate into her hands, changing it in the only way she found available.

Although Merricat spends most of the novel fighting to maintain the social structure she has created, she originally displayed her warrior state before the opening of

the novel by retaliating against the patriarchy which had inhibited her. Merricat acts as warrior because she rids herself of those who try to dominate her without her approval. She not only fights her dragon (the familial domination) but she attacks it head on and without warning. Merricat is the only one of Jackson's three characters who approaches her situation not by looking inward to try to fix herself but by looking outward and attacking the societal problem.

Merricat has a variety of mental disorders which restrict her from acting as a rational being and help to explain her violent reaction to domination. She suffers from a form of schizophrenia called Schizotypal personality. The DSM defines this as:

> A pervasive pattern of deficits in interpersonal relatedness <including> (1) ideas of reference; (2) excessive social anxiety; (3) odd beliefs or magical thinking, e.g., superstitiouness; (4) odd or eccentric behavior or appearance; (5) no close friends or confidants (or only one) other than first degree relatives. (341-2)

Merricat has no friends except for Constance; in fact, she rarely even talks to Uncle Julian although she is always concerned for his welfare. She also has a special friend, a cat named Jonas, with whom she believes she can directly communicate. Since the novel is written in first person,

Merricat simply tells the reader what Jonas is thinking and feeling. For example: "'Jonas,' I told him, 'you are not to listen any more to Cousin Charles,' and Jonas regarded me in wide-eyed astonishment, that I should attempt to make decisions for him. 'Jonas,' I said, 'he is a ghost,' and Jonas closed his eyes and turned away" (87). Merricat projects feelings and responses onto the cat and incorporates them into the story making him seem, to the reader, like an opinionated animal. Merricat's appearance also fits well with the Schizotypal personality -- neither she or Constance can remember the last time Merricat combed her hair (97).

Like Eleanor, Merricat also suffers from Avoidant Personality Disorder (social discomfort) which keeps her from looking for relationships outside her sphere of acquaintances. In keeping with the core character, Merricat is restricted by paranoia. However, the most striking of Merricat's mental illnesses is the Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder which stems from the superstitiouness involved in the Personality Disorder:

> Obsessions are persistent ideas, thoughts, impulses or images ... Compulsions are repetitive, purposeful and intentional behaviors that are performed in response to an obsession, according to certain rules ... When the person attempts to resist a compulsion, there is a sense of mounting

> tension that can be immediately relieved by yielding to the compulsion. (245)

Merricat simply cannot function without trying to maintain power. She attempts to control her surroundings by performing superstitious acts such as burying dolls and nailing books to trees: "On Sunday morning I examine my safeguards, the box of silver dollars I had buried by the creek, and the doll buried in the long field, and the book nailed to the tree in the pine woods; so long as they were where I had put them nothing could get in to harm us" (52). While these objects are positioned correctly around the perimeters of the house, no one from the village (or the patriarchal society in general) will be able to penetrate the invisible force field Merricat has created and ruin the life she and Constance have built.

By the time the novel begins, Merricat has obviously been mentally ill for a while and has also already released a good deal of her pent-up anger. Through the act of poisoning her family, she has dealt with the bulk of her oppressors as well as the bulk of her rage; she is living in the aftermath of her explosion instead of, like Eleanor, building up to it. The current focus of Merricat's energies is the maintenance of the solitude she and Constance have; however, this solitude is interrupted when the girls' cousin Charles comes to try and bring them back to society (and patriarchal dominance). Jackson spends a good portion of

the novel mapping out the girls' lives before a man arrives on the scene (Uncle Julian does not seem to count because of his complete dependence). She shows life as routine and, although not exactly normal, at least consistent and nonviolent enough to provide a sense of security. Cousin Charles acts as an attempted reestablishment of male control which Merricat senses and abhors.

Merricat has a premonition that some type of change (Cousin Charles) is coming and increases her compulsive behaviors in an attempt to ward off his approach: "On Sunday morning the change was one day nearer. I was resolute about not thinking my three magic words and would not let them into my mind, but the air of change was so strong that there was no avoiding it" (65). The change does come, however, and with it a resurgence of Merricat's former anger. The anger is immediately displayed through an intense dislike and distrust of this cousin/man who has invaded Merricat's privacy.

Gradually, Cousin Charles begins to take over the girls' social structure by doing little things like running errands (92) and advising Constance on how to handle Merricat (95). Eventually, Charles stops subtly trying to gain patriarchal control and blatantly demands power by wearing his uncle's (the old patriarchal force) clothes (100), living in his uncle's bedroom (86) and vowing to punish Merricat (114). Merricat connects Cousin Charles

with the murdered domination of her father, recognizing him as the reincarnation of her oppressor (her father) when she says, "Charles is a ghost" (86) (Carpenter 35). The connection with the old oppression drives Merricat deeper into her anger until it boils over into her second battle with the patriarchy.

The major strife of the novel begins to build right at the beginning when Charles, being aware that Merricat does not like him, begins to torment her by saying things like "'I wonder if Cousin Mary knows how I get even with people who don't like me?'" (87) and "'Where would poor Cousin Mary go if her sister turned her out? ... What would poor Cousin Mary do if Constance and Charles didn't love her?'" (95). Merricat's violent temper bubbles close to the surface again as Charles tries to turn Constance against her in an attempt to tear down the female society structure and replace it with the lost patriarchal domination. The orphan's fear of abandonment is a touched nerve, releasing the anger and action-oriented attitude of the warrior archetype.

The final blow that activates Merricat's rage is this suggestion of punishment. When Merricat originally poisoned her family, her anger had been set off by being sent to bed without supper. Angered by Merricat's strange obsessive and superstitious behavior, Cousin Charles questions Constance, saying "'Aren't you even going to punish her?'" which releases Merricat's destructive whirlwind of fury. "'Punish

me? ... You mean send me to bed without my dinner?'" (114). Merricat's anger explodes at the patriarchal domination which seems to be once again forming around her. Later that evening, she causally sets the house on fire:

> I brushed the saucer and the pipe off the table into the wastebasket and they fell softly onto the newspapers he had brought into the house ... I did not see any need to move quickly or to run shrieking around the house because the fire did not seem to be hurrying itself. I wondered if I could go up the stairs and shut the door to our father's room <where Charles had been staying> and keep the fire inside, belonging entirely to Charles, but when I started up the stairs I saw a finger of flame reach out to touch the hall carpet and some heavy object fell crashing in our father's room. There would be nothing of Charles in there now; even his pipe must have been consumed. (120)

Merricat views the fire as a way to purge the house of the attempted patriarchal domination as well as a ritualistic exorcising of her father's ghost (Carpenter 35). By burning at least that portion of the house, Merricat believes the girls will be left alone to reestablish their own society. Charles' shallowness and greed is apparent when he sees the fire and commands Constance to "put the

money in a bag" (122) and again later, after running for help, he demands that the firemen "get the safe in the study" (123). While Charles had hoped to gain control over the family's monetary legacy (and in turn its power), Merricat dissolved the plan by exercising her survival instincts and warrior tactics.

Campbell's mythical quest theory functions differently in We Have Always Lived in the Castle than in The Haunting of Hill House. Where Eleanor's quest was the main battle with the patriarchy, Merricat's functions as an attempt to establish her own society within the fallout of the previous battle. The reader finds, then, a character who is in the middle of the journey at the beginning of the novel. Merricat crossed the threshold of adventure by poisoning her family. She has battled the main dragon (her immediate family) and only remains on her journey to fight other ones. However, she is literally searching for an elixir to put back together her willfully shattered world. By constantly exhibiting superstitious and compulsive behaviors (the protective objects which supposedly guard the house), Merricat attempts to maintain the peaceful world which she hopes to share solely with her sister. However, her elixirs never work because, even while they seem to keep away strangers and ward off those who try to separate the women, Merricat only succeeds in trapping herself and Constance in a limited world without much of anything -- no patriarchal

domination, yet no normal functioning or interaction.

Uncle Julian functions as a fallen version of the patriarchal archetype and the slain mythical dragon. He once had authority within the family; now he only drools, questions his memory and focuses mainly on the deed which his took his power away from him -- the poisoning. Jackson creates Uncle Julian as a symbol of the fallibility of the patriarchy. Although Merricat may not be exactly sane or happy, she has destroyed some of the authority over her by reacting in violence. Once Uncle Julian is wounded (both mentally and physically), Merricat and Constance, the women, take over control of his life in a reversal of patriarchal roles.

Cousin Charles represents a resurgence of the patriarchy and is the main dragon battled during the course of the novel. Because he is family, Charles not only is an intruding male, but also a piece of the family-oriented male domination that Merricat had battle before. His greed for power and money as well as his denial of the love Constance and Merricat have for each other shows the continuing patriarchy as selfish. Merricat and Constance, in comparison, have set up a small society where the individuals care for one another instead of ruling over each other. Charles rocks the stability of this new society by reminding Constance of the world (and the male dominance) around them. Constance seems ready to abandon the world of

seclusion when their Cousin Charles shows up. She says to Merricat:

> "I've been hiding here," Constance said slowly, as though she were not at all sure of the correct order of the words... "I have let Uncle Julian spend all his time living in the past and particularly reliving that one dreadful day. I have let you run wild, how long has it been since you combed your hair?" ... "It's all been my fault," she said. "I didn't realize how wrong I was, letting things go on and on because I wanted to hide. It wasn't fair to you or to Uncle Julian... I never realized until lately how wrong I was to let you and Uncle Julian hide here with me. We should have faced the world and tried to live normal lives; Uncle Julian should have been in a hospital all these years, with good care and nurses to watch him. We should have been living like other people. You should ..." She stopped, and waved her hands helplessly. "You should have boyfriends." (96-97 and 99-100)

Jackson uses this passage to point out that Constance realizes the abnormalities of their situation. In ridding herself of the second wave of patriarchy, Merricat not only exterminates growing domination but ensures that Constance will stay with her and not go on to lead a "normal" life,

thus quenching the orphan's fear of abandonment. For a while, it seems as if Charles is going to save them all (especially Constance) from the insanity of hiding from the world. However, Charles' true feelings surface when the house is burning and the villagers begin verbally to torture the girls. Instead of standing up for the people he claims to care about, he squawks about the safe full of cash and lets the villagers have their fun, leaving the girls once he realizes that he will obtain no money. Once again, then, Jackson makes a strong statement about the males in these girls' lives -- they are greedy, selfish, and unreliable.

The novel ends with Merricat's second successful battle against the patriarchy. As mentioned, after the fire Cousin Charles joins the hateful villagers in taunting the sisters. He leaves with the group only after the local doctor announces Uncle Julian's death (a heart attack from all the excitement). Merricat and Constance return to their home and block off the kitchen (the only uncharred portion of the house). They are even further excluded because they now have less space to themselves and what is left of the patriarchy, Uncle Julian, is gone. The girls begin to repair the damage to their societal structure in an attempt to rebuild the lonely happiness they had before:

> Slowly the pattern of our days grew, and shaped itself into a happy lie. In the mornings when I awakened I would go at once down the hall to make

> sure the front door was locked. We were most active in the very early morning because no one was ever around ... Barricading the sides of the house had been easier than I expected; I managed it in one night with Constance holding a flashlight for me. (157-8)

The intrusion of the patriarchy (Charles) has made the lives of the girls more difficult. They are even more paranoid than before, they do not feel safe in their home and are even less trusting of strangers (a few good folks had tried to bring them food but the leery sisters ignored them). The second battle with the patriarchy, although won, has restricted even further the lives of Constance and Merricat. Jackson suggests that the only type of life without domination is in an all-female society. The girls may be paranoid about further attacks from the patriarchy but they are, for the moment, in complete control over their lives.

Jackson shows in We Have Always Lived in the Castle that the patriarchy can be disarmed and in some cases even beaten; however, the most important statement of this novel is that, in the current state of things, no woman can totally win when battling it. Even though Jackson ends her story with a reestablishment of the new female ruling class, the structure is obviously not one which would appeal to many people. But is it better than being dominated by men? Jackson may be saying yes simply by ending the story in that

light. However, We Have Always Lived in the Castle does say for certain that while the patriarchy leads many women to crumble under its power, some women fight back and actually succeed in staving off the effects of that society's structure. By creating a character who defeats her enemy (even though she is raving mad), Jackson successfully creates the opposite of Eleanor, who cannot fight back. Having covered both ends of the spectrum, Jackson is now free to wander in the middle, exploring a character who stays in the gray area of a continual battle with the patriarchy.

4. Aunt Fanny and the Words of Father

The Sundial describes the apocalyptic ending of a patriarchal system and the hoped for beginnings of a equally matriarchal system. The story opens just after the funeral of Lionel, the head of the Halloran family. Lionel's mother (Orianna Halloran) plans to take over as head of the household because her husband, Richard Halloran, who spends much of his time grieving for his dead son, is a confused invalid (much like Uncle Julian). Aunt Fanny, the sister of Richard Halloran who has been bumped from power because of her unmarried status, begins receiving messages from her dead father concerning the end of the world and the establishment of a new world, thus setting up the premise of the novel. The people living in the Halloran house are to be saved from the earth's destruction only if they follow exactly the instructions of Aunt Fanny's dead father; they are then expected to procreate and repopulate the world. Fancy, Orianna's granddaughter, portrays the younger generation who will eventually inherit and continue the power structure set up by her elders. Most of the novel is spent waiting for the end of the world to come, while Aunt

Fanny continues to receive messages from her dead father.

In this novel, Jackson extends the overthrown patriarchy motif through the juxtaposition of one character who longs for the domination (Aunt Fanny) against another character who wishes to have complete control (Orianna). Aunt Fanny's character is similar in structure to Eleanor in that she recognizes the dominance of the patriarchy but does not have the strength (or the desire) to defeat it. Orianna acts as a power-hungry version of Merricat because she wants not only to create a free society for herself but she wishes to take hold of the traditional patriarchal power. Jackson questions the idea of one group of people dominating another by showing that some women, if they had the power, would chose to be equally tyrannical as the patriarchy. Aunt Fanny is, however, Jackson's compilation of the two extremes displayed in the other novels and is the middle-of-the-road version of the core character.

The character of Aunt Fanny revolves mainly around the orphan archetype; she is dependent and constantly searching for acceptance from those around her. When she does not receive acceptance, she creates the image of her father and projects onto him what she cannot achieve from her peers. Her unmarried status is important to her character and her view of the patriarchy because it explains both her sense of self and her desire for the continuation of the system. The domineering father system is the only type of system she has

ever known; Aunt Fanny cannot bear the thought of rejecting that system, thereby rejecting the only family structure (her childhood family) that has the opportunity to fulfill the desires of the orphan. Because she does not fit into any family but only revolves around the outskirts of other families, Aunt Fanny is more susceptible to the fears of the orphan as well as the desire for any kind of attention, even if it is oppressive. Therefore, Aunt Fanny prefers a type of domination she is familiar with (male) instead of a new order (female) in which she will have no role.

Aunt Fanny does, however, display a touch of the warrior archetype mingled with the orphan. By creating the visions of her father, Aunt Fanny gains control over the house and the people in it as they continually wait for the father's advice. Orianna, and the others in the house, immediately accept the authority of the dead father; some doubts are raised but they are quickly squashed by the powerful Orianna (97). However, the reinstatement of the old patriarchal power as a tool for obtaining the new order of power restricts Orianna from ever really ruling. She is dependent on the patriarchy for guidance and power. Aunt Fanny is in control, although she does not realize that the visions are in her mind, and she reinstates the patriarchy in order to gain the attention and respect of the others. If she appears to be chosen as a receptor of important messages concerning the end of the world, Aunt Fanny will

seem indispensable. Her insanity caused by the domination is, then, the catalyst for the novel and also allows her to get everything she wants: power, control and attention (especially from males).

Aunt Fanny's mental disorders are similar to those suffered by Merricat in that they are both schizophrenic. She suffers from Schizophrenia (Paranoid type) which is described as:

> The presence of characteristic psychotic symptoms <such as> delusions, prominent hallucinations and bizarre delusions ... The essential feature of <paranoid> type of Schizophrenia is preoccupation with one or more systematized delusions or with frequent auditory hallucinations related to a single theme ... Associated features include anxiety, anger, argumentativeness, and violence. Often a stilted, formal quality or extreme intensity in interpersonal interactions is noted. (DSM 194-197)

Like Eleanor and Merricat, Aunt Fanny is extremely paranoid; she is, in fact, more so because her paranoia is an ingrained part of her illness. Her fears seem to stem from the continual lack of control over her life which leads, in turn, to her delusions and hallucinations. Because Orianna intends to take over the control (and it may be even harder for Aunt Fanny to be dominated by another woman), Aunt Fanny

develops the delusion that her father is desperately trying to communicate with her from the grave. This primary auditory hallucination acts as Aunt Fanny's battle against the new female domination as well as the psychological impact from previous domination.

The anger in Aunt Fanny is shown in several ways, one of the main areas being her rocky relationship with Orianna. From the beginning of the novel, the two women do not get along and the reader is immediately shown some level of struggle, although it may not always be for power. Orianna shows her domineering nature in the first interaction between the two women. While Aunt Fanny resists any fuss being made over her, Orianna insists that she sit down and have a glass of wine. Orianna ignores Aunt Fanny's biting remark: "'I only take wine with my equals'" and answers coolly when she spits: "'I was not brought up to take orders, Orianna, but I suppose you are mistress here now'" (9). The rivalry which exists between the two women functions as the release valve for much of Aunt Fanny's anger at life and domination. One important aspect of Aunt Fanny's life that causes her much pain is her unmarried status. Notice that Jackson, throughout the entire novel, refers to her as "Aunt Fanny," restricting her to one role in her life. As the novel shows, Aunt Fanny has no life outside of the one she has lived in the house, which entails being the aunt of the new generation, Fancy.

Aunt Fanny's sexual frustrations are an additional part of her anger. She is very proper about her unmarried station in life but yet throws herself at those who are "below" her in a desperate plea for attention. When Jackson first reveals Aunt Fanny's insanity, Fancy and Aunt Fanny have been going for a walk on the property. Fancy runs ahead, leaving Aunt Fanny alone in the newly forming mist next to a garden spotted with statues. When Aunt Fanny realizes she is lost, she leans against the thigh of one of the male statues and finds it frighteningly warm:

> She stumbled, and put out her hand to catch herself against the marble pillar, but the mist cleared briefly and she saw that she had caught hold of the long marble thigh of a statue; standing soberly on his pedestal, the tall still creature looked down on her tenderly. The marble was warm and Aunt Fanny drew her hand back and screamed "Fancy, Fancy!" There was no answer, and she turned and ran madly, putting her feet down on flowers and catching herself against ornamental bushes: "Fancy!" she screamed, taking hold of an outstretched marble hand beside her, "Fancy!" stopping just short of a yearning marble embrace, "Fancy!" and turned away crazily from a marble mouth reaching for her throat. (25)

Aunt Fanny has one other encounter with the come-to-life

marble statues in which the same type of physical love is displayed (89). Her horror is not merely at the life found in the statues but at the sexuality and the inviting nature that they represent; although she, on one hand, longs for attention from men, she is also afraid of it.

The particular vision cited above, though, leads to much more than an aborted sexual encounter. Aunt Fanny is hysterical by the time Fancy answers and can only finding her way out of the garden by listening to Fancy's voice. However, before she reaches the house, Aunt Fanny is subjected to another frightening experience. Right after the attempted sexual/romantic touches from the statues, Aunt Fanny runs into, for the first time, the ghost of her father:

> Somehow, sobbing, Aunt Fanny came through the mist and into the summer house and in four wide steps was running down the lawn toward the sundial in the darkness, and then she heard a voice. It was huge, not Fancy at all, echoing and sounding around in and out of her head: FRANCES HALLORAN, it came to her, FRANCES HALLORAN ... This was fear so complete that Aunt Fanny, once Frances Halloran, stood with nothing but ice to clothe her; was there something there? ... Aunt Fanny moved one hand, blindly. "Father?" she said without sound. "Father?" ... "The father comes to

> his child and says gently that within himself there is not fear; the father comes to his child. Tell them in the house that there is danger ... When the sky is fair again the children will be safe; the father comes to his children who will be saved. Tell them in the house that they will be saved. Do not let them leave the house; say to them: Do not fear, the father will guard the children ... Aunt Fanny, formerly Frances Halloran, put her hand down onto the sundial and found it warm. "Father?" she said into the sudden bright sunlight, but there was nothing there. "You were never so kind to me before," said Aunt Fanny brokenly. (27-28)

This passage shows several things. The first and most important is the initial contact between the living and the dead, or, the first episode of Aunt Fanny's hallucinations. Aunt Fanny was shocked that her father had appeared to her and that he had such an important message to reveal. The ending of the current world means, for Aunt Fanny, the possible beginning of a world in which the rules are changed. Society would be created with a completely different set of rules, perhaps rules which would accept Aunt Fanny instead of shunning her. Then, not only would she be accepted by everyone, but she would also be a role model for living.

The second important aspect is the idea of Aunt Fanny's relationship with her father before his death. She states at the end of the quote that her father had never been so kind to her before. Aunt Fanny hints that her father never singled her out for anything important and/or never really cared for her welfare. Of course, Aunt Fanny does not realize that she is hallucinating and projecting kindness onto a father who apparently never really felt it. The third interesting issue brought up in this passage is Aunt Fanny's old name. "Formerly Frances Halloran" is stated in the way one would introduce a married woman whose name had been changed. Aunt Fanny is no longer Frances Halloran even though she is not married; she is forever only Aunt Fanny and is permanently restricted to the role of spinsterly aunt.

Another example of Aunt Fanny's desperate desire for an adult relationship (which adds to her anger when ignored) is shown in Essex, the male friend of Orianna. Although Jackson is never explicit, she suggests that Essex and Orianna are having an affair. Aunt Fanny tends to turn to Essex for protection, wanting him to fulfill the stereotypical manly duty of protecting her from her fears. When she receives the first message from her father, Jackson ends the passage by stating that Aunt Fanny fled from the sight, screaming for Essex (28). A little farther into the story, a captain arrives on the scene, staying as the guest

of one of the women in the house. Aunt Fanny cannot help throwing herself at him. He states: "<Aunt Fanny> was around knocking on my door last night when everyone was asleep. 'Captain,' she says 'let me in, let me in, I'm only forty-eight years old.'" (105). Aunt Fanny is once again denied and, in order to compensate for that wound, immediately demands attention through her hallucination by hinting that the instructions from her father "have been far more detailed than many of you realize" (107). By adding an air of mystery to the hallucination, Aunt Fanny is able to gain a firmer hold on the situation thereby consoling her shunned self with the power of her father.

When Aunt Fanny does not receive the attention she desires from a man (the desires are mimicked in the scenes with the statues), she turns to her father and pretends that he did not just dominate her but loved her as well. By creating the image of her father and projecting onto him feelings of love and respect toward her, Aunt Fanny is fulfilling her orphan desires for acceptance and love (both of which she cannot gain from real relationships) as well as keeping the power-hungry Orianna in check. However, Aunt Fanny does not stop with her father; soon she is trying to reestablish her whole childhood and the power structure that ruled it.

As the searching orphan, Aunt Fanny finds that she can only look inward to satisfy the desires which are ignored in

the world around her. After she has the group at the house under her control (although Orianna still has much of the physical control) and after the men have turned her down, Aunt Fanny begins to search for love in her past. She starts by retreating to the attic where all of her mother's furniture and knick-knacks are kept. She arranges the attic so that it looks exactly as the house did when her mother was still alive; she then brings Fancy up and has her play the role of the child-Aunt Fanny while Aunt Fanny plays her own mother. Eventually, the theme of marriage comes into play. As her own mother, Aunt Fanny tells Fancy, or herself as a child:

> "My darling little Frances will grow up to be a lovely woman, tall and fair, and some day she will find a man who is as good as her father, and she will marry him and they will have strong and happy children of their own. But my son Richard will never marry; he will stay with his mother always, standing by his father, so I will always have a strong wise man on either side of me." (144)

This passage show several parts of Aunt Fanny's orphan archetype as well as her anger. First, the passage shows a mother who loves her daughter and is concerned for her welfare (Jackson hints that Aunt Fanny's parents were not). Second, it shows Aunt Fanny having the acceptance and love of a husband as well as the acceptance and love from her

parents because she does what is expected of her and marries. Third, it shows her brother Richard not marrying which holds two messages; 1) Orianna will not be around to rule Aunt Fanny and 2) Aunt Fanny, not the oldest boy, will be expected to carry on the family line, giving her the affection of her family as well as the power of creating an heir.

Aunt Fanny's struggle for acceptance as well as her struggle for power are closely related to her orphan archetype. The domination she felt under her father and, as the last passage shows, her obvious rating as second to her brother have caused Aunt Fanny to retreat into the mental illness that provides soothing images of both power and love. Within her delusions and hallucinations, Aunt Fanny can ease the pain of the abandoned orphan, filling all her emptiness. Also, the hallucinations allow her to control Orianna, who wishes to take over the power of a family to which she is not blood related.

The dragon in The Sundial is different from the ones Eleanor and Merricat battled because, although Aunt Fanny is still fighting domination and authority, she battles a female embodiment of it (Orianna) as well as a representation of power in general. As the novel proceeds, Orianna holds a ball for the entire village without telling the villagers that the house-dwellers believe the end of the world is coming. Orianna expands on her power by claiming

that the villagers are her people, or subjects, and that she plans to wear a crown when she is presented before them (136). However, the villagers do not appreciate Orianna and, after the party, go home as if the world were not ending. Orianna fully expects to maintain the power she currently has in the new world. She barks orders, commands action and does not listen to those who question her. What she does not realize, though, is that she is truly taking orders from Aunt Fanny; Aunt Fanny ultimately defeats Orianna because she is in control. However, Orianna thinks that she is taking orders from her dead father-in-law, Mr. Halloran, and does not seem to realize that she has only a secondary power. Although Aunt Fanny outwits Orianna, neither of them ever lets go of the trust in the patriarchy.

The mythical journey takes on, then, a different form for Aunt Fanny. The frustrations of her life had been leading her toward the journey for a long time but she never really crossed the threshold until she began to act out her schizophrenia. Like Merricat, Aunt Fanny hopes to bring back an elixir that will fix the society around her as well as defeat Orianna, the dragon. Of course, for all of the characters involved in the apocalyptic expectation, the elixir is not just something to fix society but a new version of it. Orianna wants the new power but the other characters, whether they stay because they believe, are afraid to leave or have no where else to go, look also

toward a restructuring of society. Therefore, all of the characters journey, in a sense, together toward the end of the world as they know it and the beginning of the a new power structure.

Although The Sundial ends with the people waiting for the destruction of the earth, Orianna is not a part of their group. She does not survive her battle with Aunt Fanny and meets her death at the bottom of a long staircase. Jackson hints that either Aunt Fanny or Fancy pushed Orianna, but that question is never really answered. At the beginning of the novel, Fancy believes that Orianna has killed her own son, Fancy's father Lionel, by pushing him down the stairs (507); Orianna never denies it. Orianna dies by the same fate and although everyone generally agrees that someone pushed her, no one tries too hard to find the murderer. Fancy grabs the crown, taking control of the physical symbol of power, while Aunt Fanny takes charge of the group and leads the people in preparation for the coming day (the day when the world will end). Aunt Fanny's dragon is killed and she has usurped the power and respect she longed for while Fancy becomes the symbol for the first generation of the new world. Aunt Fanny truly believes that she receives messages from her father and is therefore satisfied that the patriarchal power has been reestablished through her, creating a lifestyle similar to her childhood.

Mr. Halloran functions much in the same way as Uncle

Julian in We Have Always Lived in the Castle. He too is a representation of the fallen patriarchy and the fallibility of it because he spends the novel grieving the loss of his own power as well as the patriarchal power of his son. Once Orianna is dead, the entire household generously includes him in the preparation for the coming day although Orianna had wanted him to remain secluded. In this act, Orianna had hoped to keep the patriarchy under control by locking it away. Aunt Fanny, though, does not fear her brother and is happy because her arch-rival is dead, allowing her the attentions of her brother.

What is mysterious about the whole novel is the belief in communication with a dead person and the fact that the people never question Aunt Fanny's sanity. Jackson briefly discusses unquestioning belief:

> The question of belief is a curious one, partaking of the wonders of childhood and the blind hopefulness of the very old; in all the world there is not someone who does not believe something. It might be suggested, and not easily disproven that anything, no matter how exotic, can be believed by someone. On the other hand, abstract belief is largely impossible; it is the concrete, the actuality of the cup, the candle, the sacrificial stone, which hardens belief; the stone is nothing until it cries, the philosophy is

nothing until the philosopher is martyred. (33)

Jackson uses belief to show the continued effects of patriarchal domination. Because the domination is not currently present, the "believers" long for it. If the father had been alive, would the people follow? Although intent on becoming a ruler in her own society, Orianna must wait for the instructions of a dead man in order to begin her reign. She, as well as all the other characters, is still restricted by the patriarchy. No one questions the authority of Aunt Fanny because she is really a representation of the authority of the patriarchy.

In this novel, Jackson introduces the idea of a type of oppression not restricted to one sex but used on all people. The struggle for power is much more real because it is the power over all other people, not just over the self (as in The Haunting of Hill House) or over a select group (as in We Have Always Lived in the Castle). The Sundial is the only one of the three novels that shows women wanting to rule more than just their own lives. Orianna truly desired to be queen of the new world. In her defeat, Jackson leaves the group waiting for a world that really has no established leader. By the end of the novel, both the patriarchy and the matriarchy have been physically crushed. Aunt Fanny's sense of power is more the desire to have people listen to her than to control the lives of others. However, because she is acting through the patriarchy, she becomes just

another ruler and the patriarchy, although not in a physical sense, continues to rule.

In creating a novel like The Sundial Jackson offers the final possibility of the three novels: the woman turns to the insanity induced by her surroundings, puts it to use for her and, through it, gains the death of the dragon as well as the sedation of the orphan's needs. However, one of the novel's strongest messages is the fact that this new society, neither patriarchal or matriarchal, is left dangling on the brink of existence. Of course, the reader never knows what becomes of the new society, perhaps suggesting that although Jackson realizes the problems of the patriarchal structure, she has no suggestions for a new type of power structure.

5. Jackson's Theory

Shirley Jackson tackles many issues related to female oppression and insanity in the three thriller novels discussed in this work. Each novel has a variety of separate avenues which, once trodden, might lead the explorer to a continually changing motif in the story. However, one cannot get away from the insanity that prevails in and saturates Jackson's novels. The frustrations and individual rages of the characters she creates are both horrifying and frighteningly familiar to those who have experienced the kinds of domination and problems described in her books.

In all three of the discussed novels, Jackson creates a character who suffocates under the hand of the patriarchy. These women all, in a sense, die from oppression. For Eleanor, the death is literal but, in the cases of Merricat and Aunt Fanny, the death is metaphorical in that normal, everyday life is no longer a possibility. Merricat is restricted to the little life she has created for herself and Constance while Aunt Fanny teeters on the edge of an imaginary apocalypse. One wonders how long Merricat and Constance can live in complete solitude, without doctors or

technology. One wonders how long the house-dwellers will wait before going angrily back to the world, upset at the days, weeks, months, years shaved off theirs lives by Aunt Fanny's insanity. It is easy for the reader to become attached to the characters Jackson creates because, while they are often flat and unfeeling, they still reach out to the reader, crying for the freedom that their societies will not give them.

In creating these three novels, Jackson brings to life the core character described in the first chapter of this work. This core is not three separate women, but one basic woman who is simply put into three different situations. The lives of the characters are intertwined and, if one steps back from the text, the three women mesh into one who suffers three different fates. Jackson provides the two opposite poles of reaction to oppression (Eleanor and Merricat) and the outcome of staying in the middle (Aunt Fanny). The reader of the three novels is shown every major outcome of the battle with the patriarchy: winning, losing, or continually fighting.

However different the outcomes of the stories, there are plenty of similarities in addition to the theme of dominance. One of the most striking of these similarities in structure is the inclusion of a house in each story. For all of the women, a house is extremely important to their lives and their lives are dependent upon that structure.

Eleanor must get away from the house, Merricat must literally barricade herself in one and Aunt Fanny must stay in or close to one in order to survive. By the end of the stories, all three woman have stayed in those houses, although all three did not survive. Obviously, houses are symbolic. They have been known as keepers of the heart as well as dwelling places for poltergeists.

In Jackson's eyes, though, houses are symbolic of oppression. In her biography of Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman states that Jackson saw, in both her real and fictional houses, a type of life: "Well-built old houses with character and personality held, as has been previously observed, a fascination for Shirley Jackson; for her, houses -- at least her fictional houses -- were like people" (Friedman 104). The houses described in the three works all became symbols for the oppressive nature of society. All three women chose to stay in the house that oppressed them, finding a strange kind of solace in the structure. Merricat finds that her castle is the only thing that will protect her from the hateful people around her, yet she is restricted by her own choice. Aunt Fanny knows that her house gives her power over others, yet she must mentally submit to her father; Eleanor views Hill House as a way out of life, a road that will end the loneliness and pain she feels but leave her forever in the grasp of the house.

Jackson takes the metaphor of the house and provides it

with a male character who wants to dominate the female. In each novel, the male has some kind of interest in the house. Dr. Montague is fascinated by the possibility of the supernatural and comes to Hill House to study it. Although he is not the main oppressive force in the novel, Dr. Montague dominates Eleanor in his own way while trying to find the source of power in the house. For Merricat, the domineering man is Cousin Charles, who desperately wants to gain control of the house as well as the money in it. Aunt Fanny, on the other hand, recreates the tie between her father and the house, therefore recreating the power. Apparently, his hold over her was so strong during his life that even in death he rules her and his house.

What is, however, even more striking than the continual inclusion of house metaphors are the haunting similarities to Jackson's own life. Jackson's life was dominated by her own father from the very beginning. Judy Oppenheimer, in her work Private Demons, states that Jackson was "daddy's girl from the start" and that her father "was a person of high energy, often impatient; he had the forceful personality and sharp mind of the good business executive and thought he saw a great deal of that in his daughter" (15). Jackson began forming her own ideas about independence, though, and often rebelled against her family. Her biggest rebellion was her marriage to Stanley Hyman which became another oppressive relationship. Hyman was a

confident, stubborn critic who pushed Jackson to write — (Oppenheimer 96). Although Jackson adored him, she would not be dominated and would fight him, even physically, if they disagreed (Oppenheimer 89).

Jackson seemed to find writing therapeutic and she dealt with everyday happenings as well as lifelong frustrations in her creative works. All three novels clearly show her interest in magic and ghosts (especially The Haunting of Hill House) while also revealing the fear of rejection she had faced all of her life. We Have Always Lived in the Castle is a testimony of Jackson's agoraphobic fears and uncomfortable feelings in the town where she lived. She claims that both Merricat and Constance are part of her, really one character which was split for the purposes of the book (Oppenheimer 234):

> Castle is almost a paean to the panic disorder known as agoraphobia, whose sufferers are unable to leave the house. Constance and Merricat end up entombed and blissfully content. Merricat is not a passive creation; if anything, she is a conqueror. Yet her final choice, made with a flourish of triumph, is to opt for a suspended state, a kind of death-in-life. Writing Castle, Shirley shuffled through her options and chose agoraphobia as the best answer for her character - and, through them, for herself. (Oppenheimer 236)

Jackson had, as she wrote to a friend, "written <herself> into the house" and the fear of leaving that house comes through in We Have Always Lived in the Castle (Oppenheimer 237). The Sundial acted as a place for Jackson to vent her rage at the silliness in which people, especially the rich (in Jackson's opinion), often participate:

> The setup is strikingly reminiscent of the ultrarich Newcastle estate that loomed high above Shirley's neighborhood ... it must have pleased Shirley a great deal not only to become, for a time, as rich and powerful as she had always wanted to be, placing herself high above the town, but also to toy with the possibility of finishing off the entire world in one mighty swoop. (Oppenheimer 216-217).

Jackson, in short, wrote her life into her work, creating her characters around her own fears and placing them in situations she herself found frightening and difficult.

Shirley Jackson's works uncover the details of a system which most people (especially feminists) hope to put aside. The domination of one person over another strictly because of sex is unarguably wrong and unjust. Jackson uses the characters in her stories to tell the tales of women who are pushed so far to their limits that they find themselves insane. Insanity may help oppressed women to cope with their lack of freedom but for the oppressor it becomes

further proof that women need to be coddled and protected.

In describing three reactions to patriarchal domination, Jackson shows that not all women will stand for domination. Together, Eleanor, Merricat and Aunt Fanny speak clearly for Jackson's views on oppression. Jackson obviously finds it disgusting, restrictive, frustrating and, at times, even laughable. As a society we must listen to our members. Writers like Jackson have stepped out into the limelight in order to vent their anger at a terribly unbalanced society and their works are effective ways of getting society's attention. In order to avoid situations like the ones Jackson describes, our culture is going to have to change. As long as one group of people sees another as useless, infantile or worthless, we, as one big group, will be stunted in our growth. Jackson makes this perfectly clear when she ends these three novels not with the reestablishment of a good way of life but with the creation of escapist ways of dealing with the bad. Jackson's characters always seem to settle for less, leaving smart, productive people excluded from a society that needs all the input it can get.

Jackson shows her readers that she does not intend to sit by and watch her gender being abused. Her incredible talent allows her to display her feelings and opinions in ways which send chills down her readers' spines. Perhaps Stephen King said it best when he "dedicated one of his

books, Firestarter, 'to Shirley Jackson, who never had to raise her voice'" (Oppenheimer 227). Jackson is one of the greatest thriller writers for that very reason. She did not have to resort to gore or violence; she simply looked at humanity and, in a calm tone, stated what it is that scares people -- their own lives.

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